



Jeremy Siskind
Housewarming

BROOKLYN JAZZ UNDERGROUND 053

★★★★★

The Susan Krebs Chamber Band
Simple Gifts

GREEN GIG 032

★★★★½

Designed for intimate gatherings, chamber jazz is transparent and lovely, and a shining example of such music is pianist Jeremy Siskind's *Housewarming*.

Siskind is a pianist of limpidity and steel, surprising the listener with his unexpected alternations. His key allies are the breathy, subtle vocalist Nancy Harms and the woodwind magician Lucas Pino, a player who can make a saxophone sound like an accordion overheard during a stroll alongside the Seine.

The primary topic of *Housewarming* is intimacy. It's evident in such originals as "Decrement" (with Siskind at his most dramatic and percussive), the yearning "Hymn Of Thanks," and "Light," a bravura showcase for guest vocalist Kurt Elling. Siskind demonstrates his affinity for mood—and for sharing, as Elling sings plush over Pino's plaintive tenor saxophone. The imagery braids the notions of light and time, paralleling the merge of Elling and Pino. Siskind's other guests are New York Voices founding member Peter Eldridge, whose vocals give the title track poignancy, and Kendra Shank, an experimenter whose voice, voluptuous and precise, animates "Everything You Need."

At its best, chamber jazz arranges to showcase each player without disguise or artifice, while emphasizing the music's detail and nuance. Siskind, a deliberate player who chairs the piano department at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, has mastered this craft. He has led the core trio in the *Housewarming* Project since 2012, performing more than 70 house concerts, and he aims to make music that engages. His originals fit perfectly with four covers, including the tunes that bracket the disk: "Whispering Grass," a bouncy probe of nature and the finale, a world-weary version of Lerner and Loewe's "I Could Have Danced All Night," featuring Harms in narrative command and Pino at his most sinuous.

Like food cooked over a slow Bohemian fire, *Simple Gifts* is savory and satisfying. Couched in the chamber jazz sound, it is perfectly timed

and sequenced for the house concerts the band mounts; its eight tracks showcase the storytelling vocals of Susan Krebs and the nuanced textures of her chamber band, a quartet that blends strings and winds to novel, entrancing effect.

Listening to *Simple Gifts* is easy because Krebs sings in a narrative style, and her voice carries a lot of weight despite its relatively small size. Krebs also lets the song speak for itself, whether the story is Abbey Lincoln's prideful cha-cha "Throw It Away," Sergio Mendes/Alan and Marilyn Bergman's romantic "So Many Stars," the gentle pastorage of Jimmy Rowles/Cheryl Ernst's "Looking Back" or the brooding "Falling Grace."

Honed in small venues and living rooms, *Simple Gifts* is an album to ponder vignette by vignette.
—Carlo Wolff

Housewarming: Whispering Grass; Light; When He Loved You; Moonlight in Vermont; Decrement; Housewarming; Ghost Story; New Old West Theme; Hymn Of Thanks; Lighter Than Air; Arise; Everything You Need; I Could Have Danced All Night. (61:10)

Personnel: Jeremy Siskind, piano; Lucas Pino, woodwinds; Nancy Harms, Kendra Shank (7), Peter Eldridge (6, 8), Kurt Elling (2, 11), vocals.

Ordering info: bjurecords.com

Simple Gifts: Let's Call A Heart A Heart; Looking Back; So Many Stars; Once Upon A Summertime; Falling Grace; Throw It Away; For All We Know; Simple Gifts. (40:40)

Personnel: Susan Krebs, vocals; Scott Breadman, percussion; Paul Cartwright, violin, viola; Rich Eames, piano; Rob Lockart, percussion.

Ordering info: susankrebsmusic.com.

David Torn only sky

David Torn: guitar, electric oud, real-time mechanical and electronic modifications

In Concert

- 5/8 New York, NY
- 5/11 Marlboro, NY
- 5/12 Dunellen, NJ
- 5/13 Cambridge, MA
- 5/14 Philadelphia, PA
- 5/16 Portland, OR
- 5/17+18 Seattle, WA
- 5/19 San Francisco, CA
- 5/20 Sacramento, CA
- 5/21 Los Angeles, CA
- 5/22 Denver, CO
- 5/26 Minneapolis, MN
- 5/27 Milwaukee, WI
- 5/29 Chicago, IL
- 5/30 Cincinnati, OH
- 6/1 Washington, DC
- 6/3 Baltimore, MD
- 6/4 Carrboro, NC
- 6/6 Asheville, NC
- 6/7 Atlanta, GA

More dates in prep



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